EEAC/S7/26/11/1

Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Tuesday 24 November 2026
11th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

Broadcasting and News

1. The Committee will continue its evidence-taking on broadcasting and news. The purpose of this short piece of work is to follow up on aspects of the inquiry undertaken by its predecessor committee into Scottish Broadcasting towards the end of Session 6, including to consider the implications of the most recent developments.

2. The evidence sessions will seek to—

   - explore the current landscape and issues facing public service broadcasting,
   - consider recent developments, including the implementation of STV's changes to news provision and the BBC's recently announced changes,
   - explore the implications of recent developments for the sector, for news provision, and in terms of wider social, cultural and economic impacts, and
   - consider the current landscape of, and challenges facing, local and community news and radio.

3. The Committee undertook its first evidence session relating to this piece of work on 10 November 2026. This session will be the second of the three evidence sessions the Committee will undertake in relation to this topic.

4. The Committee will take evidence from—

   - Rufus Radcliffe, Chief Executive, STV

   and then from—

   - Rhodri Talfan Davies, Deputy Director-General, BBC
   - Hayley Valentine, Director, BBC Scotland
   - Louise Thornton, Head of Multiplatform Commissioning, BBC Scotland

5. STV have provided a written submission to inform the evidence session. This is included at **Annexe A**.

6. A briefing paper from SPICe is available in **paper 2**.

7. The Ofcom annual report on the BBC was published on 19 November and can be found here. Please note that this was published after finalisation of the SPICe paper, which does not therefore include reference to the Ofcom report.

Clerks to the Committee
November 2026

Annexe A: Written submission from STV

Summary

STV is Scotland’s leading commercial broadcaster and a major UK production group. We are a listed shareholder owned business and receive no public funding. Our commercial revenues, generated from advertising and the commissioning market through our production business, STV Studios, support the provision of trusted Scottish news and public service content.

The media industry in which STV operates is experiencing cyclical pressures and deep structural change. Cyclical pressures are currently heightened by the weak macro economic conditions characterising the UK economy. A more significant and recent challenge is structural change as audiences migrate from traditional linear TV viewing to on-demand streaming, dominated by global platforms, which is eroding the reach of broadcasters, such as STV, and redefining our industry's underlying business models.

About STV

STV is Scotland’s leading commercial broadcaster and largest production company. Beyond core channel STV, the business now operates across a much broader range of platforms and markets through two divisions.

Audience

Scotland’s leading platform for audiences and advertisers, reaching around 1 million people each day and 3 million each month through the STV broadcast channel, STV Player, STV Radio, podcasts, social media and YouTube. These activities are funded primarily through advertising. In 2026, year to date, STV has worked with over 300 Scottish businesses, helping them reach customers, build their brands and grow.

Within the Audience division, STV holds two Channel 3 licences through which it is required to provide a range of high-quality programming that contributes to the wider remit of public service television, including the provision of news and current affairs. STV News and STV's current affairs programming provide significant public value and we are proud to provide these services, but they deliver very little direct financial return, so they are supported by revenues generated across the wider business.

Studios

Scotland’s largest production company and one of the leading groups in the UK, with 20 labels producing programmes for broadcasters and streaming services in the UK and internationally, many based in Scotland.

Why STV is changing

The media market is being reshaped by three connected cyclical and structural forces:

- audiences are moving from scheduled viewing to on-demand services and global platforms;

- a challenging advertising and commissioning market is putting pressure on investment;

- and consolidation is increasing as media companies seek greater scale.

STV is responding by following audiences across broadcast, streaming, audio and digital platforms; widening its advertising offer; developing new revenue streams; and focusing its production business on returnable content, a broader customer base, international opportunities and digital content.

Maintaining a disciplined cost base is also essential to ensure the business remains sustainable and able to invest in Scottish content.

In addition to the above challenges, STV faces a unique jeopardy that places at risk the ability of audiences to readily access STV's content on connected TV platforms. This lack of guaranteed prominence for STV and STV Player can be addressed through full implementation of the Media Act 2024 which STV is urging the UK Government to enact.

The Media Act 2024 offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to renew the public service media framework for the way people now watch television. It requires connected TV platforms to give public service services, including STV Player, appropriate prominence. Parliament has passed the legislation; the priority now is effective implementation.

For STV, the test is straightforward: viewers in our licensed areas should be able to find, recognise and access STV and STV Player easily as their Channel 3 service. However, many global connected TV platforms use a UK-wide approach that does not reflect STV’s regional licence. This can result in ITVX or ITV branding being shown to viewers in Scotland instead of STV, creating confusing journeys and making Scottish public service content harder to discover.

This is not only a commercial concern. Prominence supports reach; reach supports advertising revenue; and that revenue helps fund Scottish journalism, regional news and programming. If regionalisation is optional, platforms may not deliver it, weakening the outcome Parliament intended.

Quite simply, if viewers can’t easily find STV and STV News, they will not watch it.

Modernising STV News

Delivery of trusted news and current affairs remain central to STV’s public service role. Earlier this year, Ofcom approved changes that allowed us to modernise STV News and reinvest more resource in digital news. We are now able to share more content of interest to viewers in both licence areas, alongside bespoke regional sections for the north and central regions in each programme. The purpose was to place the service on a sustainable footing while protecting regional journalism and responding to changing audience habits.

Journalists have been retained in all existing locations across Scotland, with local newsgathering remaining at the heart of the operation. The new 6pm programmes

launched on 13 July. Since then, our share of viewing has increased by 6% year on year, and we continue to be the most watched news programme in Scotland.* Over the same time period our digital video views have increased 12% year on year.**

The new model enables STV News to cover stories across television, radio, social and digital platforms. For example, in the recent search for missing fishermen near the Port of Ness, coverage began on STV Radio, social media and the lunchtime television bulletin, supported by reporting from the scene and a live report for the 6pm programme. Video coverage generated 1.75 million views.

At a time of growing misinformation and disinformation online, it is vital that trusted, regulated Scottish journalism is visible wherever audiences choose to consume news. We have to have our content where and when people demand it.

Conclusion

The media sector is changing rapidly, as audiences adopt new ways to watch. STV is responding by modernising our services, investing where audiences are growing and adapting our business to ensure we can continue to deliver trusted public service content for years to come.

Parliamentary support for full implementation of the Media Act and a clear roadmap for the future distribution of television will help secure a sustainable, visible and accessible future for Scottish public service media.

Ends.

Source : BARB 13TH Jul'26 -30TH Oct'26 v's same period in 2025
Source: Social Sprout. News & Sport pages on: Meta, X, YouTube and TikTok: July – Oct'26 v same period 2025